

HURRICANE SANDY RELIEF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. TONKO) for 2½ minutes.

Mr. TONKO. Just yesterday, Americans celebrated New Year's Day. They ushered in 2013. As we rang in the new year, the usual message of hope that accompanies the new year—any new year—rang hollow for millions of Americans because of actions taken at the close of that New Year's Day here late last night. People were met with the devastating news that we were not going to take up a measure that would respond to Superstorm Sandy.

And so I rise today to ask the leadership of this House, the people's House, to respond accordingly to the needs of people. I make this request not through some political calculus but rather through the lens of caring and concern and compassion, which ought to be the hallmark of this great institution. We ought not forget that the role that we play here calls upon our moral responsibility to engage our actions and our compassion and empathy for the people we represent or perhaps do not represent directly. Because we, I believe, need to relate to that measurement of compassion to family, friends, neighbors and yes, at times, total strangers.

I make this request sensitized by a situation in my district, the 21st Congressional District at the time, in upstate New York, just about a year-plus before the devastation of Sandy. The torturous treatment of Mother Nature through Irene and Lee on that congressional district, my congressional district, stole lives, wiped away livestock, flooded homes, tore away the hopes and dreams of individuals, and found people abandoned, having lost everything for which they ever worked. And I witnessed how people responded to that tragedy. They picked up and mustered the strength. But they required government to be their partner at that very dark moment in their lives. Having witnessed that pain, having visited communities and having talked with the people, shared tears with the people, I understand that now this situation, in a much more densely populated area of our State, and in neighboring States, requires our assistance, immediate assistance, to respond with compassion.

Mr. Speaker, and leadership of this House, I implore you to respond with compassion and empathy and bring us to the floor to acknowledge and support the funding for Superstorm Sandy.

HURRICANE SANDY RELIEF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. COURTNEY) for 1 minute.

Mr. COURTNEY. When Hurricane Sandy struck on October 29 in eastern Connecticut's Long Island Sound with 90-mile-per-hour winds and high tide, it

created a path of destruction never seen before. Homes were wiped out, utility infrastructure was wiped out, transportation infrastructure was wiped out. But what was so inspiring about it was that the first responders acted—police, fire, Coast Guard, the Governor of Connecticut, local and municipal officials. They acted. In the weeks since then, the Senate has acted. President Obama declared an emergency on October 30. The Department of Homeland Security acted. The only place that hasn't acted is the House of Representatives, where last night, in the dark of the night, the Speaker announced that he was abandoning the people of northeastern America and allowing the Hurricane Sandy relief bill to die.

That is unacceptable. The people who acted—the first responders, the caregivers, the local officials—they deserve better. The local officials, the Members of Congress for the Northeast, in a bipartisan way, deserve better. The Speaker must reverse his decision. It is time to act today.

PASS THE SAFER ACT TODAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) for 1 minute.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, in 1985, 13-year-old Lavinia Masters went to sleep in her bedroom, which should be the safest place on Earth for children. But a few hours later, she was woken up by an outlaw who sexually assaulted her and put a knife to her throat. She went to the hospital. DNA evidence was taken from her. She did everything she was supposed to do. But that evidence sat, untested, on a dusty crime lab shelf for 20 years while the perpetrator ran loose somewhere in Texas. When the kit was finally tested, police discovered that Kevin Turner had committed this crime. Justice could not occur for Lavinia because the statute of limitations had run.

Mr. Speaker, Lavinia is not alone. There are 400,000 untested rape kits with DNA evidence in the United States. That's why I have introduced, along with Congresswoman MALONEY of New York, the SAFER Act. And we can pass it today by unanimous consent. This is a bipartisan piece of legislation. New Yorker, Texan, Democrat, and Republicans, speaking different languages, it doesn't get much more bipartisan than that. This act would allow funds to be used to test untested sexual assault kits for DNA evidence so justice can be done for victims.

And that's just the way it is.

HURRICANE SANDY RELIEF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. HIMES) for 1 minute.

Mr. HIMES. I remember two things of that horrible night that Sandy hit my community in Fairfield County, Connecticut. Of course, I remember the

devastation and the damage that we have so detailed this morning in this Chamber. But I remember something else: the response of the people who stood up and said, I will help. The firefighters of Old Greenwich, the Red Cross in Bridgeport, the churches that opened to serve soup and to keep people warm, schools that were opened to address the fact that people didn't have homes.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you about Lieutenant Russ Neary of the Easton Fire Department, who left his wife and two daughters behind that night to go serve the people of Easton. I attended his funeral several days later because he was killed that night doing what is best about all of us, which is that we stand up and we say we will help in times of crisis.

Every charitable instinct, every dignified thing, everything that is noble about what those people did that night is denied by the decision of the Republican leadership to not bring up Sandy today and to leave desperate and vulnerable people hanging.

Mr. Speaker, reverse your decision now, and let's do the right thing by our people.

HURRICANE SANDY RELIEF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. CLARKE) for 1 minute.

Ms. CLARKE of New York. I rise today to express my feelings of anger, frustration, and disbelief that the Republican leadership has failed to fulfill this promise on emergency supplemental disaster aid for the victims of Superstorm Sandy. Even though we were able to put our political differences aside to prevent an economic disaster, I am stunned and saddened that this compromise came at the expense of much-needed relief. Like my colleagues from the Northeast, I feel betrayed. There were 305,000 housing units destroyed and 265,000 businesses affected. I'm a proud native of Brooklyn, New York, and it pains me to see the travesties that have affected my hometown.

I'm in disbelief at the callousness with which this matter has been dispensed with. It is truly an embarrassment and a sad day that the House of Representatives has become a body so entangled in political one-upmanship that it is unable to come to the aid of Americans whose lives have suddenly been destroyed and turned upside down. This funding would have not only rebuilt the community's infrastructure but begun the healing process so sorely needed.

Mr. Speaker, we need your leadership today. Please bring this matter to the floor for a vote.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Debate may not continue past 11:50 a.m.